

The vowel of 'komen'

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The vowel of the Dutch verb 'komen' (to come) has an interesting history. Since approximately the 13d Century it is occasionally followed in the orthography by a bigraph <mm>, probably indicating shortening. There are various hypotheses concerning the origin of this shortening, which we will briefly discuss. Intriguingly, the rise of the short vowel has led to a pattern in which long and short variants cooccur almost everywhere in the Dutch language area, without one of the two ever having really 'won' in the course of the past 800 years. In this talk we discuss how this curious pattern can be understood in terms of the lifecycle theory of Bermudez-Otero (2018, 2021).